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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE LIFTS BAN ON CHINESE MILK PRODUCTS

11. Summary: Singapore's Agro-Veterinary Authority (AVA) lifted its three-month ban on imports of Chinese milk and milk products, instituted after some imports were found to have elevated levels of melamine. AVA inspectors said they were satisfied with China's control measures to ensure against future melamine contamination. However, Singapore will require for an undefined period that Chinese milk products continue to be tested for melamine and be certified as melamine-free before import into Singapore. U.S. manufacturer MARS Foods, which produced candy bars in China using local milk, is relieved the import ban is lifted but concerned about the long-term damage to its brand. End Summary.

12. Singapore's AVA announced December 18 that it had lifted its ban on imports of milk and milk products from China. Imports had been suspended since September 19 after a number of Chinese products were found to contain elevated levels of melamine. In all, 327 Chinese-made products were banned as a precautionary measure. AVA announced the lifting of the ban after officials inspected Chinese dairy farms, milk collection centers and food processing establishments and concluded that China had sufficiently tightened the overall control system to prevent future contamination with melamine.

13. Despite the inspectors' seal of approval on China's control measures, AVA will continue to require that imports of Chinese milk products meet several conditions. Products can be imported only from establishments approved for export by Chinese authorities; manufacturers are required to test each batch of raw materials and end products for melamine; and Chinese authorities must inspect and test each shipment, and attach a health certificate to each shipment certifying that the product is melamine-free. Ms. SEAH Huay Leng, Director of AVA's Food Control Section, said the conditions were temporary, but AVA had not placed an end date on the conditions. Seah added that AVA would continue to sample shipments of Chinese milk products to verify the system was functioning correctly.

14. Corrine Lim, National Sales Manager for U.S. company MARS Foods, said that the candy bar manufacturer was getting back to normal as its made-in-China products returned to Singapore store shelves. MARS products had been hit by the ban despite the company's insistence that its milk suppliers in China were not linked to the melamine scandal and that none of its products had tested positive for melamine contamination. Lim said the company had taken a financial hit during the ban, and would have to see what long-term impact the ban would have on MARS' brand and sales in Singapore.

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